

# LITHUANIA LEADER SOFTENS HIS TONE TOWARD MOSCOW

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## SEES NO HURRY TO SECEDE

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### Republic Again Seeks Talks — No Comparable Gesture by Soviets Is Apparent

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By FRANCIS X. CLINES

Special to The New York Times

MOSCOW, April 2 — After three weeks of tension, discord and daily pressure from Moscow, the leadership of Lithuania softened its tone today, insisting that it never expected immediate independence despite declaring itself free of Soviet rule on March 11.

"It may seem to some people that this amounted to a demand that power be handed over the very next day," the Lithuanian President, Vytautas Landsbergis, said tonight. "We did not expect this, and we did not count on this."

Mr. Landsbergis spoke in Vilnius, the Lithuanian capital, and his comments were reported on the Moscow television. In his remarks, he again stressed his call for negotiations, which has so far been rejected by the Kremlin. Nonetheless, the Lithuanian leader's comments showed a marked easing of the republic's insistent language toward Moscow, and there was as yet no comparable softening by the Kremlin toward the breakaway Baltic republic.

## Firmer Signal From Estonia

Leaders of the independence drive in Estonia continued their separate, less confrontational course in challenging the Soviet authorities. But the new Parliament in Tallinn, the Estonian capital, sent a firmer signal to the Kremlin, saying a new law on secession, to be debated this week in Moscow, did not apply to Estonia. [Page A14.]

The Kremlin says the new legislation should become the only route used by a republic seeking to break away from the Soviet Union.

As a result of the pressure from Moscow to rescind its independence declaration, the Lithuanian parliamentary leadership seems to have switched to a more ingratiating tone. The Lithuanian panel showered President Mikhail S. Gorbachev with praise today as it formulated the gentlest possible rebuff of his demand that the republic annul its declaration of independence before the Kremlin considers holding talks.

### 'Admiration' for Gorbachev

But offering a message intended to keep alive their hope for talks, the leaders of the Lithuanian Parliament praised Mr. Gorbachev's "strong leadership" in encouraging political freedom and cited Lithuanians' "admiration" for his commitment to law.

Eventually, the statement from the Parliament's Presidium took care to "respectfully remind" the Soviet leader that Lithuania stood by its March 11 renunciation of Soviet authority. Lithuania quickly invited him to send a representative to hear the case for independence, something Mr. Gorbachev continued to avoid through another day of confusion and standoff.

"We said in our statements what

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stages we had in view and how by means of agreements and a gradual takeover of certain functions we would consolidate independence," Mr. Landsbergis said in a separate comment that included more qualifications than he had previously offered in proclaiming independence as a fact.

In contrast to Lithuania's careful diplomacy in Parliament, a harsher situation was reported developing at the republic's main printing plant, with Soviet troops and Communist officials loyal to Moscow apparently successful in stopping the printing of Lithuania's independence newspapers. The stoppage was reported after some copies were printed and circulated in the city.

### Newspapers Called 'Anti-Soviet'

These newspapers were denounced as "anti-Soviet" by Juozas Kuolelis, the secretary of the Communist Party faction loyal to Moscow, who made a speech at the plant, the information office of the new Lithuanian government said. The information office was contacted by telephone, a circumstance forced on foreign correspondents after the Foreign Ministry ordered Vilnius cleared of foreign reporters. But Western news agencies were able to distribute photos taken by Lithuanians.

The information office said that by late tonight the presses had not started for the nonparty newspapers that the new government had counted on as an outlet to the public. But printers favoring the independence government were reportedly refusing to print the pro-Moscow newspapers.

The republic's other communications resource, the Lithuanian television center, was reported in the hands of the Mr. Landsbergis's independence government. Despite continuing rumors and fears, there was no sign thus far of the Soviet troops who have been selectively seizing buildings in

Vilnius under the Kremlin's campaign of psychological pressure.

The situation at the republic's disputed prosecutor's office was reported going better for the Landsbergis government, with most workers remaining loyal to the Lithuanian Prosecutor, Arturas Palauskas, rather than to Antanas Petrauskas, the prosecutor sent by the Kremlin to take over the office.

No further Soviet troop movements were reported during the day, although late night has been the favored moment for the Kremlin's noisy armored units, a continuing reminder of the national Government's displeasure.

Mr. Gorbachev's chief political ally, Anatoly Lukyanov, chairman of the Soviet Parliament, insisted today that the Kremlin remained calm and "rather friendly" toward Lithuania. Mr. Gorbachev himself was silent on the sovereignty crisis. The Landsbergis government again sent would-be negotiators to Moscow in search of an audience with Soviet officials. They have been rebuffed so far.



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In the initial days of the crisis, Vilnius officials were demanding full-scale "negotiations" with Moscow to settle details of what they described as irreversible independence. They were rejecting Mr. Gorbachev's talk of informal "dialogue."

Today, in contrast, the Lithuanian leaders told Mr. Gorbachev that they were "ready and willing at your immediate convenience to enter into talks and discussions at any level."

Beyond the gentler tone, Vilnius officials also narrowed their immediate agenda, saying they were hoping to reach Soviet military officials willing to discuss the pressing issue of the coming spring draft of young Lithuanians into the Soviet Army. The issue is a painful one because hundreds of young Lithuanians have deserted or refused induction and are being hunted by the army as possible lawbreakers.

The Vilnius government is focusing its efforts on encouraging some faint step toward talks from the Kremlin..

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Associated Press

The sovereignty crisis in Lithuania was marked yesterday by an easing of the republic's tone toward Moscow. Vytautas Landsbergis, the Lithuanian President, stressed his hopes for negotiations that

have been rejected thus far by the Kremlin, while Lithuanian citizens waited in line at the post office in Vilnius to send telegrams in favor of independence to President Mikhail S. Gorbachev.